

Author's Notes

Early Australian Rules Football Articles Revisited

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

EARLY FOOTBALL ARTICLES RE-EXAMINED

Found, presumptive positive:

1. Over represented in mainstream newspapers 1850-1870 – along with the spuriously exalted and amplified influence on the formation of Australian rules after 1858, in which the first significant time stamp pre-dates by two years – the gravel rash game in the wilds of South Yarra – are the Yarra River cluster of clubs, formed by an ex-pat British huddle of clubs located on either side of banks of river, namely South Yarra Football Club, Emerald Hill Football Club, University Football Club, Albert Park Football Club, Richmond Football Club, Coast Football Club [Elsternwick] and Geelong Football Club.
2. With Taylor honing in on pre-codified ruby and soccer football styled games beginning to differentiate themselves from folk football barely decipherable as being different when historians refer to either, or, English, Scottish or for that matter early 19th century and earlier back to ancient times forms of harvest, festival football games. 1863 in England is when the codes clearly differentiated themselves with Association football, also known colloquially in Australia traditional as soccer player predominantly in the north and "rugby" so to speak in the south of England.
3. These historical references for the emergence of the code coincide with Tom Wills lived experience of development and whilst he may have had some insight into nuances between the pre-codified game including the more flamboyant and interesting style of football he found played by Aboriginal in Australian, Man-Grook, leaping running fast, bouncing the ball and dodging tempered was the writing of these development but embedded nevertheless in the rules the committee he was part of under Bryant's leadership of the Melbourne Football Club to settle upon and right down the 1859 Melbourne rules.
4. It was only in 1866 when club delegates of self-appointed senior clubs sat down and thrashed out successfully the presumptive Victorian Rules was the Eton reviewed or evolved rules from 1847 to 1865 also considered along with, for the first time, a delegate representing perhaps the Anglo-Irish/Indigenous Irish predominant membership clubs, Mr. John McIndoe and also Lockie Bracken of the Albert Park Football Club, and inherently ex-Pat British formed club but with Lochie Bracken's strong knowledge of the Templemore/East Munster form of Pre-GAA, post Irish folk game of Templemore Citizen-Garrison rules not too distant whatsoever from the Melbourne Football Club's 1859 rules, to also be sufficient in the wording of the rules in 1866 to accommodate the growing features of Marn-Grook, high marking, fast running, dredging (ditto Templemore rules per se), bouncing the ball whilst running fast (ditto Templemore rules), and with the Garrison field led rigour of set rectangular fields with goal posts and defined boundaries.

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5. Collectively, and not exclusively these improvements to fair play and order of the Australian rules game from 1866 with its roots more recently tracing back through the Melbourne rules in document to 1859 and in played as preferred subsets differing in the style of games played by the ex-pat British lean, formed clubs - South Yarra Football Club, Emerald Hill Football Club, University Football Club, Albert Park Football Club, Richmond Football Club, Coast Football Club [Elsternwick] and Geelong Football Club; and expiate British/Anglo-Irish lean formed clubs, Collingwood, Fitzroy and Carlton - in which the style of 1858-1865 football they played whether it be scratch match or challenge cup style competition was more akin to a mix of styles familiar to post 1847 Eton rules.
6. Also noted within contemporary football articles to being fractured along rugby versus soccer styles with the latter most evidence by the MFC-St Kilda FC deadlock on the MFC ruling out tripping and hacking (shin-kicking) preferred by the Saints, and more starkly contrasted by the ex-pat British formed North Melbourne Football Club taken over socially so to speak by Victorian Irish of the North Melbourne kind, mixed Anglo-Irish/Indigenous Irish and mixed Anglican/Roman catholic resisting the British-Anglo Irish only styles embraced by half sibling ethnic clubs, so to speak - Fitzroy, Carlton and Collingwood in the early 1860s to early 1870s, with Fitzroy later morphing into being labelled an Irish Fenian club by 1897, predominantly preferred perhaps for internal club politic and social reasons the predominant post 1850 England style of football, than Templemore rules. The later which would have been known to some.
7. Strengthened however in demanding attention of the variant game the larger British cluster of football clubs in Melbourne from 1858-1866 saw in 1858 as corrupted and a game of the Fenians and demonstration of their social organisation and fear of political gathering in places like Graham's Paddock Hotham Hill and Flemington Racecourse.
8. Detailed factual narratives for the Footscray and Williamstown Footballs Club suffered a similar fate to North Melbourne escaping publication by mainstream newspapers.
9. After North Melbourne Cricket Club *come* North Melbourne Football Club secured a new ground in Royal Park in 1858, the ex-British founders of the club in 1859, abandoned the club leaving it to the swelling membership ranks of the Victorian Irish.
10. Active was the club's delegate Mr. John McIndoe in negotiating the new Victorian rules.
11. Thomas Wentworth Wills in all sense and purpose was a football club adventurer, explorer and collector of styles and nuances of how people and those from different ethnic groups preferred to play the general game of football.
12. This notion of Wills is backed up by evidence which has perhaps bewildered or confused football historians who in their narrow investigations set aside what they saw perhaps ad contradictory evidence of him as a player with the Melbourne Football Club when his reasonably presumed name popped up in player lists or cited by other clubs as a member of the distractor club.

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13. The author further stands to be corrected from the 1850s up until 1877 when the VFA formed, players of clubs regardless of their ilk, location or style of game preferred could roam to play the next week with what we describe today as a competitor club. This is so even though from 1856 and throughout the scratch match era come challenge cup and carnival St Patrick's day eras, free agency so to speak was custom and practice.
14. Many players if not most preferred to play for their local park side occupied by their local club at the nearest paddock to their home. Thomas Wills, Harrison and T.S. Marshall appears to be exceptions to the rule.
15. Other lesser lights appear to also pop up on player lists for different clubs one week and return to their more regular club for what appears from newspaper accounts to be the club of origin so to speak next match. This is attributed more to a shortage of player number rather than the player falling-out with his original club.
16. Its alternative cause by the excitement by the player to have their hungry appetite to play the game quenched not being able to wait until their original clubs in next fixtures.
17. Presumptive positive is that Thomas Wentworth Wills took a serious social/anthropological scientific approach to his football playing. He used connection with other clubs outside his club of original Melbourne to learn more about how the game should be developed and grown.
18. Wills clearly popped up playing for the Richmond Football Club on the Richmond Paddock on alternate weeks after regularly playing matches for Melbourne on the same paddock. Harrison did the same but on a more limited basis.
19. Wills is clearly recognised by the Geelong Football Club as a founder of their club in 1859. This came off the back of him earlier playing football in Western Victoria and observing Indigenous players enjoying their Marn-Grook Indigenous Australian football game.
20. The author suspects Wills, who played for Carlton and also for North Melbourne is the roaming Thomas Wills. He certainly cannot be ruled out to being the same person.
21. Even if this presumptive positive identification of Tom Wills roaming across clubs is made in error above – playing with the Carlton and North Melbourne clubs - irrefutable is him playing along with fellow Melbourne member Harrison for Richmond Football Club in 1859.
22. Certain also is that Tom Wills found his way the Geelong by 18th July 1859 to establish the Geelong Football Club to which Geelong Football Club is the authority to back this claim.
23. The North Melbourne and Carlton experience in Royal Park from 1864 is fascinating. Like the municipal boundaries themselves with Carlton becoming a suburb so to speak from 1863, they formed their own football team. Presumptive positive and requiring a separate study should further contemporary evidence become available, Carlton

25. Football Club may have sprung from some of the disgruntled and fleeing co-founders of the North Melbourne Cricket Club come North Melbourne Football Club circa 1859.
26. Supposed also several North Melbourne members playing for the cricket and football club in Royal Park from 1860 remained connected to the disgruntled original founders of the North Melbourne club. They members post 1860 were perhaps British born and or Anglo Irish not fully endowed to North's Victorian Irish membership mix.
27. Whilst from 1860 to 1863 they remained part and parcel of the North Melbourne Football Club, one of these splinter teams forming best described as made up of Indigenous Irish players rather than being roman catholic per se, and they it is said, become the Carlton Imperial Football.
28. The other, made up of players of British-Anglo-Irish ethnicity and form this group of players sprung in 1864 the Carlton Football Club. The latter coincided with Carlton from 1863 becoming more a less a break way suburb form Hotham/North Melbourne with their own post office and sense of geographical identity.¹
29. The people of the Carlton Imperial Football Club post 1864 are said to have increasing resided one block north in Pelham Street (Indigenous Irish 0 Roman Catholic Church Precinct), and those more likely to be affiliated with the Carlton Football Club from 1864 until at least 1877 from the churches' precinct was in Queensberry Street, between Lygon Street and Rathdowne Street (Anglican, Free Gaelic and Wesleyan).²
30. Further consulting the research of Yule (2004), retrospectively speaking, in 1858 one of Carlton's best-known landmarks began the forerunner to Carlton United Breweries. It was however in 1859 In Bouverie Street North Melbourne and so named the North Melbourne Brewery when it opened. Yule (2004), recognises North Melbourne was appropriate because for some years after Carlton was surveyed all the land north of Victoria Street was in fact 'North Melbourne'³ was Hotham was North Melbourne.⁴
31. Contentious as these suppositions maybe they warrant consideration and further investigation at some point as it is irrefutable by fresh evidence, North Melbourne absorbed Carlton Imperial in March 1887, or with the same end results, the members of the Carlton Imperial Football Club returned back to their mother club on a voluntary and enthusiastic basis in March 1877.

¹ Yule, P, 2004 (ed), Carlton: A history, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2004.

² Ibid, Yule, P, 2004.

³ Ibid, Yule, P, 2004.

⁴ Frost 1988, p found very liberal in defining Carlton as a suburb and its boundaries which were North Melbourne come Hotham from 184-1860 as his claims some parts of Carlton and their formation before North Melbourne in 1870, the latter a further error.

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